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Sarasota County Health Department identifies case of Hepatitis A in food service worker: Encourages vaccinations



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Sarasota, Fla. – The Sarasota County Health Department (CHD) has identified a case of Hepatitis A in a food service worker in Sarasota. Following laboratory confirmation on July 3, Sarasota CHD immediately began conducting an epidemiological investigation and today determined that the individual worked at Piccolo Italian Market & Deli located at 6518 Gateway Avenue while infectious.

If you frequented this restaurant between June 21st to June 29th and have not previously been vaccinated for Hepatitis A, you should consider being vaccinated at your local county health department or primary care physician's office. You will receive the first dose of the vaccine, with a second dose being administered six months later. If you have previously received the Hepatitis A vaccine, you do not need to take additional action.

Sarasota CHD is offering the vaccine at their main office – 2200 Ringling Blvd in Sarasota – from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

There will also be a FREE Hepatitis A vaccination event for patrons exposed between June 21st and June 29th:

- **Sarasota County Health Department, 2200 Ringling Blvd in Sarasota**
 - **July 6 – 9 a.m. until 12 p.m.**

Hepatitis A vaccine may provide protection against the disease if given within two weeks after exposure. Patrons should monitor for symptoms of Hepatitis A infection which include sudden onset of abdominal discomfort, dark urine, fever diarrhea, pale white stools and yellow skin and eyes (jaundice). Anyone experiencing these symptoms should seek medical attention promptly.

Individuals with questions about Hepatitis A can call the Sarasota CHD at (941) 861-2873 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Vaccination is the best way to prevent the spread of Hepatitis A. People who should be vaccinated include:

- All children at age one year

- People who are experiencing homelessness
- Users of recreational drugs, whether injected or not
- Men who have sexual encounters with other men
- People with direct contact with others who have Hepatitis A
- Travelers to countries where Hepatitis A is common
- People with chronic or long-term liver disease, including Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C
- People with clotting-factor disorders
- Family and caregivers of adoptees from countries where Hepatitis A is common

How is Hepatitis A treated or Hepatitis A infection prevented?

- **Hepatitis A vaccine is the best method of preventing infection.**
- No medicines can cure the disease once symptoms appear. People with Hepatitis A symptoms should seek medical care immediately.
- Most people get better over time but may need to be hospitalized.
- Previous infection with Hepatitis A provides immunity for the rest of a person's life.
- People who are exposed to Hepatitis A may be given vaccine or immune globulin within 14 days of exposure to prevent infection.

How Hepatitis A is investigated by the Department of Health

After a case of Hepatitis A has been reported to the Health Department by a health care provider, a county health department epidemiologist will interview the individual and collect information regarding the timeline of their past 50 days, including travel, occupation, food history and more. The epidemiologist will then identify all close contacts of the ill person who should receive the Hepatitis A vaccine to prevent any possible spread of the illness. The majority of cases are close contacts of persons who are experiencing homelessness, or persons who use injected or non-injected drugs. **Fewer than 5% of cases are food workers, and to date, the Florida Department of Health has not identified a single case of Hepatitis A transmission from a food worker to a restaurant patron.**

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